

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-3 (canceled).

Claim 4 (previously presented): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein the absorbent layer is formed of a fibrous web comprising rayon, and the hydrophobic liquid-permeable layer is formed of a spunbonded nonwoven fabric comprising polyethylene terephthalate.

Claims 5-7 (canceled).

Claim 8 (currently amended): A sanitary tampon comprising:

an absorber including [an] a flat absorbent layer made of an absorbent fibrous material and a hydrophobic liquid-permeable layer covering both surfaces of the absorbent layer, said flat absorbent layer having a plurality of small open recesses dispersed in both ~~[[the]]~~ surfaces of said absorbent layer and extending toward an inner area of said absorbent layer, and said flat absorbent layer ~~[[absorber]]~~ being folded along three fold lines extending in a longitudinal direction of said flat absorbent layer ~~[[absorber]]~~ to have three clefts defined between adjacent folds and then compressed over a substantially entire length into a column shape, wherein the three clefts open on a column surface in a direction parallel to the longitudinal direction,

wherein the small open recesses are formed by embossing ~~[[the]]~~ said flat absorbent layer prior to folding and compression so that a fiber density of the absorbent layer is increased in a vicinity of the small open recesses.

Claim 9 (previously presented): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein the absorber is folded into a column shape to have a generally M-shaped cross-section.

Claim 10 (previously presented): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein prior to compression, the small open recesses have an opening diameter of 0.5 to 1.0 mm and a depth of 1 to 5 mm and are distributed in a density of 1 to 10 recesses/cm².

Claim 11 (new): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein a density of the flat absorbent layer is highest along a central portion of said flat absorbent layer in the thickness direction.

Claim 12 (new): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 11, wherein the plurality of small open recesses dispersed on both sides of said flat absorbent layer extend to a center layer of the flat absorbent layer, said center layer being positioned around said central portion of said flat absorbent layer and having a higher density than layers of the flat absorbent layer extending to each side of said flat absorbent layer.

Claim 13 (new): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein a perimeter of said flat absorbent layer prior to being folded comprises mirror image parallelogram portions about a longitudinal center line of the pad defining an arrow feather shape.

Claim 14 (new): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein ones of said plurality of small open recesses on one surface of said flat absorbent layer are directly opposed to ones of said plurality of small open recess on the other surface of flat absorbent layer in the thickness direction.

Claim 15 (new): A sanitary tampon as set forth in claim 8, wherein ones of said plurality of small open recesses on one surface of said flat absorbent layer are slightly offset from ones of said plurality of small open recess on the other surface of flat absorbent layer in the thickness direction.